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TRANSFORMING CHURCHES, TRANSFORMING LIVES
Southeast Conference UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST
SOUTHEAST UCC Conference

May 1, 2017

From the Conference Office

Moderator's Message

by J.R. Finney, Conference Moderator

I grew up hearing often an old saying that goes like this: "Don't let your good be the enemy of your better and your better, the enemy of your best." The idea is if we hold on to tightly to what we think is good, we often fail to let go of that good so that we can achieve our better or our best. That old saying took on a new meaning for me as I prepared for Easter Sunday after reading the lectionary scriptures for Easter 2017. (Acts 10:34-43 and John 20:1-18).

In John 20, after Mary Magdalene realizes it is the Risen Jesus talking to her, she evidently goes to embrace her dear friend, Jesus. But Jesus rebuffs her saying in verse 17, "Don't hold on to me, for I haven't yet gone up to my Father." Why would Jesus do that to her? As I pondered that question, I began to let my mind wander. What if Jesus used this incident as a metaphor to teach Mary and us the lesson of that old saying of not "letting your good be the enemy of your better or your best."

Obviously, Mary was overjoyed to see that Jesus whom she loved was alive. However, maybe Jesus wanted her and us to realize that though He was alive, His resurrection means that things have changed. To experience the fullness of God in our lives, we can't hold on to the Jesus we knew before Good Friday. We must let go and embrace the wholeness of God in Christ that is only made possible by Christ's resurrection on Easter.

Are we holding on to the good of only a pre-Good Friday Jesus? If so, perhaps only in letting go as Peter did in Acts 10 while preaching at the Gentile Cornelius' home, will you be able to embrace all of who the Resurrected Christ is, and experienced God's better and best among us as the Southeastern Conference of the United Church of Christ.

We, as the Southeast Conference (UCC), are faced with some wonderful challenges for the future. Good practices of the past should be used as lessons to learned from, but they should never keep us from developing better or best practices we need to go forward and perform with excellence the ministry God has

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Coming Events

Annual Meeting Booklet Deadline
Friday, May 19

Commission on Ministry
Saturday, May 20
10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Pilgrim UCC
Chattanooga, TN

Ecclesiastical Council for Marsha Brown
Sunday, May 21
Brookemeade UCC
Nashville, TN

Upper Room Fellowship
Saturday, May 27
Nashville, TN

SECUCC Annual Meeting
Fri-Sat, June 9-10
Piedmont College
Demorest, GA

OCWM Giving

for us.

My hope and prayer is that we will learn all we can from the good practices of our past; but "never let our good be the enemy of our better and our better, the enemy of our best."

From the Interim Conference Minister

Dear Friends,

As I travel around the conference meeting you all, I am blown away by the amazing ministry we, in the Southeast Conference, do. This past Sunday I worshipped with Peace UCC in Clemson, SC. They are beginning a Tiny House Project. This project will provide a welcoming and safe haven to anyone who needs a short term place to live who has become homeless because of rejection. Their dream is to build "a house that is safe, sustainable, and mobile. When completed, it will provide a short-term 'Safe House' for an individual in the Upstate who has lost their housing due to rejection. Our dream is to bring together Clemson University students, members of the local community, and members of Peace Church, UCC. The Tiny House will also raise awareness of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people."

This ministry, and so many others, make our conference a vibrant and faithful community. So, please, invite me to come and visit your congregation, your community, your passion for ministry. God has blessed us deeply! May we share the blessings to inspire and connect us.

Blessings and peace,
Marie

Peace Church's Tiny House Initiative

Register Now for Annual Meeting: June 8-10

We're excited for this year's annual meeting taking place again at lovely Piedmont College from **June 8-10, 2017**.

Registration is now open!

Our Church's Wider Mission provides for programs, resources, and tools to keep our churches strong, effective, and growing. Our goal for 2017 is $240,000.
Donate today!

Conference Staff

Marie Bacchiocchi
Interim Conference Minister
mbacchiocchi@secucc.org
404-615-2492

Heather Bardole
Conference Registrar / Administrator
hbardole@secucc.org
404-719-6572

Sarah Kim
Executive Director of Theological Education and Dean of PATHWAYS
skim@secucc.org

Debbie Spearman
Generosity Coordinator
dspearman@secucc.org

Don Harris
Director of Communications
dharris@secucc.org

Chris Lyman Waldron
IT Specialist
clwaldron@secucc.org

Mailing Address:
Post Office Box 1950
Decatur, GA 30031-1950
Phone: 404-719-6572
www.secucc.org

Connect with Us!

We will be offering a number of options for renewal and continuing education for our Authorized Ministers and MIDs around Annual Meeting.

Thursday, June 8:

- Retreat for Authorized Clergy
- Healthy Boundaries Training
- Pastoral Issues in Addiction - A Retreat for MIDs and PIEs

Friday, June 9

- Pastoral Issues in Addiction - Retreat for MIDs and PIEs continues
- SEC Board Meeting
- 51st Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference

Saturday, June 10

- 51st Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference

Learn more about Annual Meeting **on our website**.

Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2017. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers. Click here to download the entire 2017 prayer list.

Week of May 7

- Rush Memorial Congregational UCC; Atlanta, GA
- Bryan Currie
- Lillian Lammers
- Annette Nielsen
- Lisa Stewart

Week of May 14

- Phoenix Christian Church; Wildersville, TN
- LaCretia Bellamy
- Marcia Free
- Warner Noles
- Andy Sidden

Prayer Requests

- Our prayers are with the family of **Rev. Allen B. Hollis, Jr.**, former pastor of the United Church of Huntsville, who died on Saturday, April 15. Allen was also pastor of two

former SEC congregations: Langdale Congregational Christian Church in Valley, AL and First United Church in Nashville, TN. A full obituary may be found **online here**.
- Our prayers are with the family of **David Buttrick**, member of Brookmeade Congregational Church in Nashville and retired professor at Vanderbilt Divinity School (Homiletics), who died on Saturday, April 22. A prolific author, David wrote 19 books, including his landmark work Homiletics. He was a proud member of the United Church of Christ, citing its policies of inclusion and diversity. His obituary is **online here**.
- We rejoice with, and pray for, **Andy Sidden** as he retires from full-time ministry on June 1. He is pastor of Garden of Grace in Columbia, SC.
- Prayers for **Marsha Brown** as she prepares for her upcoming ecclesiastical council. Marsha is the first Southeast Conference PATHWAYS graduate to progress this far in the ordination process.

Conference Transitions

- Congratulations to **Tim Garvin-Leighton**, who was installed as chaplain at Piedmont College on Sunday, April 23, 2017.

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah; Garden of Grace, Columbia, SC; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville; Howard Congregational, Nashville; Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain, GA; Pilgrim Congregational, Chattanooga, TN; United Church, Huntsville, AL

News from Around the Conference

Upcoming Local Church Events

Victory's 30th Anniversary Celebration (May 5 - 27)

- Join Victory for the World in Stone Mountain, GA for their 30th Anniversary Events
  - Friday May 5: Anniversary Concert
  - Sat May 13: Hats Pearls Fancy Socks Brunch
  - Sat, May 27: Cookout and Community Festival
- Learn more on their website

Marcia McFee at Kirkwood UCC (Saturday, May 6)

- Kirkwood UCC invites you to bring your team (program staff, worship associates, artists, musicians and other interested people) to discover ways to enliven and deepen your congregation's worship services. This conference will help you layer visual, auditory and experiential elements into a transformative worship experience. Breakfast and Lunch included. Learn more on the KUCC website.

Your Local UCC Congregation

- We'd love to share what is happening at your church. Send your announcements to dharris@secucc.org.

Going to General Synod? Let us know!

As you may know, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ will be in Baltimore this year. This event is open to everyone as a visitor. The Sunday afternoon worship service is

open to all at no charge.

If you plan on going to Baltimore this year, please let Heather and Marie know. This way you can be invited to our meetings and fun stuff and feel a part of our merry band from the Southeast Conference!

Training, Learning and Retreat Opportunities

Register Now for Great ONA Webinars in May!

ONA 101 Webinar: How Your Church Can Become ONA

- Tuesday, May 2, 2017
- 7:00PM - 8:30PM Eastern Time
- **Link to register online**

ONA and the Bible

- Tuesday, May 9, 2017
- 7:00PM - 8:30PM Eastern Time
- **Link to register online**

Corrections and Clarifications

In the article entitled "Spring 2017 Conference Grants Awarded" of the April 15 edition of this newsletter, we inadvertently misspelled "Spelman College," we attributed Morehouse College as a university, and neglected to include the "U" in "HBCU." We apologize for the errors.